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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [SNAR](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: DAS MOON'S FEBRUARY 11 MEETING ON AFGHANISTAN WITH
MFA DIRECTOR MARYASOV

Classified By: POL M/C Alice G. Wells. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. MFA 2nd Asia Director Aleksandr Maryasov reiterated Russia's interest in strengthening cooperation with the U.S. on Afghanistan during a February 11 meeting with SCA DAS for Afghanistan Patrick Moon. Maryasov said the situation in Afghanistan required "drastic changes," and praised the U.S. plans to deploy additional troops. He suggested a "compromise candidate" would be the best choice for the August elections. Strengthening the Afghan National Army (ANA) was a "priority task for Russia," Maryasov claimed, and said Russia would continue its assistance to the ANA. Russian companies were willing to undertake infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, such as reconstruction of the Salang tunnel, and Moscow was willing to provide some funding for them, but needed other donors to contribute too. Maryasov concurred with Moon's statement on the importance of Afghanistan-Pakistan cooperation, and questioned allegations that Iran was supporting the Taliban. He pressed for cooperation between NATO and the CSTO on counternarcotics efforts, and urged the U.S. to provide "strong and convincing" evidence to support delistings under UNSCR 1267. We again reiterated concerns about a Russian S-300 sale to Iran. End summary.

"Drastic Changes, New Tactics"

12. (C) Maryasov (whose portfolio includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iran) echoed GOR leaders' interest in deepening and broadening U.S.-Russian cooperation on Afghanistan. He welcomed the reported U.S. plans to deploy additional troops, saying the security situation was unsatisfactory and required "radical changes," not just in tactics, but also to make the policy more flexible. Moon said we were working towards where we wanted the situation to be in 4-5 years: larger, more capable Afghan security forces; less corruption; stronger consensus-building mechanisms in the government; a stronger, more effective National Assembly; a functioning judicial system. Several of the Ministries currently were very good, but others needed work.

Elections

13. (C) Noting that he had no better insight into who would be the candidates for or win the presidential elections, Maryasov stressed the need for a strong leader with national standing, but doubted anyone but Karzai could fit the bill, even with Karzai's problems. There were candidates who had influence in some regions, such as Jalali, but none at the national level. Khalilzad was internationally known, but had

enemies in Afghanistan, and his double U.S.-Afghan citizenship was viewed negatively by many. A compromise candidate, supported by the majority, would be best, Maryasov contended. The key would be for the new President to listen to all the groups in the country. In any event, the responsibility lay with the Afghans. Neither the U.S. nor Russia could make the decision for them.

Afghan National Army

14. (C) Maryasov said support for the Afghan National Army was "Russia's priority task." Moscow would continue its assistance, he stated, while repeating complaints that donated Russian military equipment from 2002-2005 had gone unused. ANA officers had received training in Moscow in 2002-2003, and Russia was willing to continue such training, as well as for Afghan police officers. Maryasov complained about "unlicensed Soviet-made weapons from Eastern Europe" being delivered to Afghanistan, saying Moscow may be willing to provide "real" Soviet weapons. They were simply awaiting Afghan DefMin Wardak's visit to discuss the details of Russian assistance to the ANA and police. In response to Moon's noting that the U.S. had provided a list of equipment and weapons being sought, Maryasov said he would study the list.

15. (C) Maryasov described the Soviet experience in Afghanistan, noting that despite the ultimate outcome, they had been able to create a fairly strong and effective Afghan army. With Soviet assistance, the Afghan army had been able

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to secure the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. By operating from a position of force, it had been possible to make progress on national reconciliation. Unfortunately, Soviet forces had withdrawn (the 20 year anniversary of the withdrawal is February 15), the U.S. had also stopped support, and as a result, the national reconciliation efforts had stopped. Maryasov suggested that the new Afghan government would be stronger if it could operate from a position of strength.

Infrastructure Projects

16. (C) In response to Moon's comment that the U.S. would welcome Russian assistance in rebuilding infrastructure in Afghanistan, such as dams and hydroelectric stations, Maryasov replied that several Russian companies were already working in Afghanistan. Two power stations had been built, and three more were in progress. These companies were ready to do more, if the financing was available. Russia was willing to pay part of the costs, but needed the U.S. or other donors to contribute as well. He suggested that Russian and U.S. experts consider ways to finance the projects.

Pakistan-Afghanistan-India

17. (C) Both Moon and Maryasov agreed that the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan was essential in bringing stability to the region. The good relationship between Karzai and Zedari was encouraging, Moon said, and the cooperation among border forces was better. While Pakistani forces were pursuing an aggressive strategy in the FATA and Northwest Territory, the Pakistani Taliban had become more aggressive, and it was still a very volatile situation.

18. (C) Maryasov agreed, noting that Moscow had urged the Afghans and Pakistanis to refrain from mutual recriminations. The Pakistan Taliban was growing stronger, and it would be important to pay more attention to that problem. While Russia supported U.S. military operations, and believed the airstrikes were effective, the GOP was opposed to such strikes. He asked if they would continue. Maryasov said the GOR had urged the GOP to assist actively with India in

investigating the Mumbai attacks. It was also important to calm down the propaganda between the two countries. Noting that S/R Holbrooke was visiting the region, Moon stressed the U.S. was engaged in intense consultations with the GOP and GOI.

NATO-CSTO Cooperation, UN, SCO Conference

¶9. (C) Maryasov reiterated Moscow's pitch for greater cooperation between NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on counternarcotics efforts. Operation Canal was a good example of cooperation, and should be strengthened. If NATO and the CSTO united, the efforts would be more effective. He also urged more active participation in creating counternarcotics and counterterrorism belts under the auspices of the UN. Maryasov reiterated the GOR's invitation for the U.S. to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in March.

Iran

¶10. (C) There were mixed messages coming out of Iran, Moon noted. On the one hand, Tehran seemed to be investing a lot of money in Afghanistan and assisting with rebuilding projects; on the other, we had intercepted weapons from Iran intended for the Taliban. Furthermore, although the narcotics problem in Iran was bad, Tehran was not cooperating with Afghanistan to prevent the trafficking.

¶11. (C) Noting the long, historical ties between Afghanistan and Iran, Maryasov expressed skepticism that the Iranian government was supplying weapons to the Taliban. It was "strange" for the GOR to hear that they were helping the Taliban, because Iran was "taking a constructive part" in rebuilding Afghanistan. Furthermore, the fact that one was Sunni and the other Shia, and the memories of the 1998 killing of 18 members of the Iranian Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif made it very unlikely that Tehran was

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supplying the Taliban. Finally, Maryasov argued that it was illogical for Tehran to support the Taliban when Iran was seeking to reestablish relations with the U.S. Moscow was looking for strong proof of GOI involvement, knowing that the black market in weapons was strong, and there were links between drug lords in both countries.

¶12. (C) Pointing to the one million Afghan refugees in Iran, Maryasov argued that Iran could be very useful in helping to stabilize Afghanistan, especially in counternarcotics efforts, and urged the U.S. to engage with Tehran on the issue.

UNSCR 1267

¶13. (C) Moon explained the importance of being able to remove persons from the UNSCR 1267 sanctions list if they no longer fit the criteria of being members of the Taliban or al-Qaeda. The inability to delist persons was making the regime less effective and making it more difficult to obtain new listings. While some of the 20 people the GOAF had asked be delisted may be criminals or bad people, that did not mean they met the criteria of 1267. He urged the GOR to be more willing to permit delistings. Maryasov said it might be possible to reconsider Moscow's position if "you present strong and convincing evidence," for the delistings.
BEYRLE